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Nyakyusa generally is in kinship groups, not villages, which set protective medicines with certain fruit-trees.

Unlike many other cattle-keeping Bantu the Nyakyusa take great pride in cultivation, men boasting about their strength in hoeing, and praising those who are diligent. Significantly, the vocabulary relating to human matches in richness that relating to cattle: we recorded 9 dozen terms—and there were said to be many more—for varieties of bananas and plantains, which are distinguished by the form and flavour of the fruit, and thirteen terms for types of cattle, distinguished by colour and markings.

Not only does success in cultivation carry prestige in itself, but it provides the wherewithal for hospitality, on which status in a Nyakyusa community turns. To be respected a man must entertain his neighbours with food and millet-beer. Control of grain and vegetables to do this depends upon his own effort in hoeing, as well as upon having wives and sons to work with him. We have seen how the laggard among the Kukwe believes that the fertility of his gardens will be sapped by his neighbours being ahead. There is thus considerable social pressure compelling both men and women to cultivate diligently. At the same time, however, no individual should be too conspicuous. Each must keep in step in cultivation with his neighbours; and though his fields may be a little larger than the average, they must not be a great deal larger. The area cultivated (visible crops and stubble) by seven compound families on the Lake-shore plain in 1935 averaged 6·13 acres per family; which, divided by the number of members in each family, gave rather over half an acre per head (men, women, and children) or 1·3 acres per adult. The acreage ranged from 1·99 to 0·61 per adult.[1]

Cultivation thus involves co-operation primarily within elementary and compound families, but it also involves village co-operation, in that neighbours hold land together, help one another in some measure, and try to carry out each process simultaneously.

The pressure of neighbours still helps to keep laggards up to the mark, and also to keep the most energetic from getting far ahead. But the village control over cultivation is diminishing for, as we have seen, the custom of keeping in step is no longer strictly insisted upon even among the Kukwe, nor does it apply

[1] Monthly report of the Agricultural Officer, Tukuyu District, July 1933. Figures supplied by the courtesy of the Agricultural Officer, Tukuyu, 1935.

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CHAPTER V

MYSTICAL INTERDEPENDENCE

a. *Witchcraft and 'the breath of men'*

In the Nyakyusa view two of the main co-operative activities of a village are defence against witches, and the punishment of wrong-doers through sickness brought upon them by the murmuring of their fellows. Fellow villagers are 'members of one another' as much on account of this mystical inter-dependence as on account of their economic co-operation and enjoyment of each other's company. The village headmen are spoken of as the leaders in the 'war by night' against witches, as they are leaders in war by day, and it is they also who are foremost in bringing 'the breath of men' (*umbepo cya bantu*) on a wrong-doer, so that his body becomes cold, and he falls ill. We must therefore examine the concepts of witchcraft and of this 'breath of men' in order to understand village relationships.

i. *The nature of witchcraft*

The Nyakyusa believe that certain people have pythons (*insoka*) in their bellies which give them power to harm men and cattle, by throttling, trampling, wounding, and kicking them. These are the witches (*abalosi*). They are said to fly by night on their pythons, or 'on the wind', either singly or in covens, to attack a chosen victim, and to leave on their beds their skins, which 'can feel nothing'. So closely are the witch and his python identified that if a python is killed the witch will die. The pythons are thought to be usually inherited from one or other parent, children of both sexes inheriting from either father or mother: children are 'born with witchcraft in their stomachs', and it is developed by accompanying a parent on his or her evil errands. However, not *all* children of a witch are necessarily witches. 'If a man witch marries a woman witch then the whole family are witches, but if the man is pure (*musela*), and the woman only a bit of a witch, then she may say to herself when she first bears a child:

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576 In Nyakyusa society it is senior relatives who formally blow
754 out water to express their good will, not suspected witches, as
among the Azande. But the admission of anger by the supposed
witch or justly shocked neighbours, and their wishes for the
patient's good health, are anxiously sought (*vide infra*, p. 110),
for such good wishes are thought to lead directly to his recovery.

757 The reverse of this emphasis on the value of confessing anger
is the belief that the man who nurses a grudge in secret without
ever admitting it is the most dangerous enemy, whether he be a
senior relative muttering to the shades, or a neighbour using
witchcraft, or a rival who has turned to sorcery. Mwambugwa, a
conservative village headman without any school education, was
very explicit on the point: 'The root of witchcraft is this—when
two people have a quarrel in their hearts and do not let it out.
Maybe I have a neighbour who hates me, but he never lets it out,
he says nothing and we seem to be on friendly terms—those are
the quarrels that are pregnant with witchcraft. But if he lets it
out and tells me that I have wronged him in some way then the
quarrel has no menace in it. It is when he lets nothing out and
stays silent, though angry in his heart, that he comes in dreams
to throttle me. That is the root of witchcraft.' Hence the insis-
tence on one accused of witchcraft admitting guilt (*vide infra*,
p. 110).

754 'The defenders' are powerful, but it is believed that witches
791 are occasionally able in dreams to get past them, and throttle
men against whom they have a grudge, or their cows. ' "The
defenders" do not go out in dreams to fight the aggressors every
night. A witch wanting to throttle a man comes night after
night.' 'Nowadays it is much worse than it used to be, since the
Europeans prevent us reporting them, and getting them stopped;
"the defenders" work hard, but some nights they sleep without
dreaming and the witches get past.'

754 Although the primary function of 'the defenders' is to see and
drive off witches, nevertheless they are also thought to use their
791 power to punish a wrong-doer. In doing so they are assisted by
• 626 the witches, but, the Nyakyusa argue, the village headman who
leads this night attack in dreams is no more breaking the law than
he is when he fines a thief in court. In both cases he is exerting
power to maintain the law. The Nyakyusa have a lively fear of
shocking their neighbours, for it is held that the shocked astonish-

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ment of fellow villagers (*bikuswiga*) or their angry murmuring (*bikwibunesya*) will bring on wrong-doers 'the breath of men' (*embepo sya bandu*) causing them, or their children, or cattle, to fall ill, and this breath is the power of the pythons exerted by 'defenders' and witches acting together. We asked Mbukile whether 'the defenders' really came to choke a proud, quarrelsome person. 'Mother! They come. "The defenders" and the witches all call one another. They all go. "The defender" is not angry (at the attack), he says, "The man killed himself, he was a quarrelsome fellow!" ' And another friend explained: 'If a woman witch wishes to choke her husband, perhaps the first night "the defenders" will turn her back, but then she will plead with them and explain that her husband is a bad man and ill-treats her, then perhaps on the second night they will change their minds and come and help her. Yes, "the defenders" turn round sometimes and throttle people.'

'The breath of men' is thought to cause prolonged illness but not death, and should a death occur then a charge of witchcraft may be brought, and the suspects be required to drink the poison ordeal. 'We said, it is forbidden to kill a man. We others were afraid, although we had disliked the victim ourselves, we feared at some later time the witch would kill us.' All our informants accepted this view in theory, but in practice several cases in which the supposed victims died were cited as instances of 'the breath of men' (see table, pp. 206–8).

The effect of 'the breath of men' is spoken of as 'the curse' (*ikigune*)[1] and its typical symptom is sterility, or a paralysis of the legs, which, it is thought, can only be cured when the sinner repents and reforms his behaviour, providing at the same time a feast of beer and meat for men of his village or, if it be against his father that he has sinned, of his father's village. At the feast it is essential that the men of the village should *admit their responsibility* for the sickness, and express hopes for the recovery of the patient. 'Formerly, they would pray and pray, they would let out all their anger, saying: "Certainly we were angry, it was us, but now it is all over." Then life would come back to the sick man and he recovered' (cf. Document, p. 240).

We see then, that a clear distinction is made by the Nyakyusa

[1] *Ikigune* is not used in the Kukwe dialect, but is common usage in Selya, on the Lake-shore plain, and in Ngonde.

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between the legal and illegal use of power derived from pythons. 'The breath of men' is the general public opinion of a whole group—of an age-village or chiefdom—acting through the 'python power' of those of its members who happen to be possessed of it, led by one or more village headmen and directed against a single person. On the other hand, individuals proved to be witches are those believed to have acted by themselves, either against the public opinion of their age-village or chiefdom, or at any rate without securing its support. No pagan Nyakyusa doubts that witchcraft is bad, or that 'the breath of men' is used to bring legitimate punishment on evil-doers, but the classification of particular cases varies somewhat with the point of view of the individual. The victim of 'the breath of men' may speak indignantly about the attacks of 'the witches'.[1]

'The defenders' are regarded as pillars of society, and their exercise of python power as right and proper, yet no one readily admits to the possession of such power; it is a proud and boastful thing to do, and not good manners. Informants, when discussing it, rarely spoke as if they had direct knowledge of the power, usually prefacing their remarks with: 'It is said that', or 'I hear that'. This was true even of village headmen who are all believed to have the power. One such man, to whom a direct question was put, replied: 'I would not go so far as to boast of it myself, but other people in my village have it.' In villages of mature and old men, others besides the headmen are often known by name as having it; and besides this there is the general belief that in each such age-village 'some people', not specified, have it as well.

iv. Witchcraft, 'the breath of men' and morality

Now the power of witchcraft and 'the breath of men' is held to operate primarily within one age-village, and it is denied that it can ever extend beyond the chiefdom. 'How could the people of another chiefdom "eat" a man?' said the village headman, Mwafula, 'It is those *here*'. The typical accusations are against neighbours and wives or co-wives and, nowadays, against fellow workers living in the same camp (cf. table, p. 198). The fact that it is within the village that witchcraft is thought to operate is

[1] cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'An African Morality' in *Africa*, Vol. IX (1936), pp. 87–8, for such a case.

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and scarcely affect accusations of practising witchcraft, save that the chief himself is never accused, though he is often thought to suffer from the witchcraft, or 'the breath', of his men. The commoners, 'the black people' (*abatitu*), are said to be the real witches, but a study of cases shows that junior brothers and sons of the chiefs are, in fact, sometimes accused. Village headmen may be accused just like the humblest of their followers, and men are accused at least as often as women (cf. table p. 198). Thus though witchcraft is held to be hereditary, and is particularly associated with menstrual blood, it is individual behaviour, not birth, or sex, that determines accusations.

What sort of behaviour, then, leads to accusations of witchcraft, and what sort of behaviour is thought to provoke attack by a witch, or bring upon one the chilling breath of men? We found that some quite specific teaching was given to Nyakyusa children on this point.

The type most usually described as a witch is the person whose character makes him (or her) to some extent isolated and unpopular—a proud man who treats his neighbours with disdain; a retiring man who always keeps silent in public; a glum wife, or one who fails to greet the other women she meets and to inquire after their children. Such people are treated by their neighbours with less courtesy and hospitality than the traditional ideals of good manners demand. 'Perhaps we do not summon him to drink beer, or to eat with us: and then when our cows fail to give milk we think, "doubtless it is he who is throttling them".'

One who fails to show sympathy with a neighbour in bereavement, neglecting to attend a funeral in the village, or one who does not try to persuade a neighbour to remain, when that neighbour is preparing to move for fear of witchcraft, is immediately suspect. The chief characteristic of witches is always said to be pride (*amatingo*), which includes a cold aloofness, as well as boastfulness and irascibility.

And what sort of people are thought to be attacked by witches? Informants agree that, though they act without public support, witches seldom act without provocation. It is argued on the one hand that they act from greed, and on the other that suppressed hatred drives them to attack (*vide supra*, pp. 92–4 and table, pp. 198–205). The Nyakyusa see no contradiction in this, for they

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believe that the witches, lusting after food, choose as victims those against whom they have a grudge. The exception is the witch who, having eaten with his fellow witches, fails to provide a victim in his turn and is compelled to offer a kinsman of his own. Mwamunda, talking of witchcraft between relatives, explained: 'Throttling of relatives is of two kinds: firstly, when kinsmen quarrel over something, perhaps cattle, and one throttles the child of his relative; secondly, when there is no quarrel, but a witch has gone with his fellow witches to eat of their food in his dreams, then they come to him and say: "You have eaten our food with us, give us your food. If you don't we shall eat your wife." Then he points out the child of his kinsman to them' (*vide infra*, p. 114). Far more often, however, the witches' attack is attributed to a quarrel, or to envy roused by conspicuous success. Men are said to excite the envy of witches by acquiring many cattle, hoeing a much larger garden than others, earning more at work, or by boasting about the importance of the position they hold in government or other employment. A woman excites envy by becoming the favourite wife of her husband, or by carrying a heavier load than her fellows when she goes with them to fetch firewood (cf. Document, p. 229). Our friends constantly referred to the danger of rousing envy; it is in fact believed to be the motive behind witchcraft in a large proportion of cases.

Good food rouses the envy of witches also, and the man who eats alone is felt to be in danger, but not only from the witches. It is said: 'If you have grudged your neighbours meat . . . those who watch over the village by night, "the defenders", will be angry, and call the witches to help; they will eat you.' Here we come to the legitimate use of python power, 'the breath of men'. Greed at a feast; failure to share whatever meat, or beer, or other fine food one has, whether it be prepared in the village, or brought as a gift from affines; failure to send the customary cut of an animal killed as a gift to the chief; and failure to provide a feast on certain occasions, are all regarded as sins liable to bring on the wrong-doer the 'curse' or 'breath' of his aggrieved neighbours. The feasts specially mentioned as being necessary are those at death and at marriage (*vide supra*, p. 70, and Document, p. 206). As Mwakwelebeja, an old commoner, put it: 'If I did not kill at a funeral, the neighbours, those who eat the meat, would be angry. As they scattered from the funeral they would say: "He is

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754 626 hard, he has not killed a cow for the death of his child." When they go round telling other people like this, they bring down the "breath of men".'

626 But it is not thought that neighbours are concerned only with enforcing hospitality within the village; they are also shocked (*bikuswiga*) by disrespectful behaviour towards parents and parents-in-law; by a wife swearing at her husband or hitting him; by incest; by a woman 'soiling' her lover, i.e. by running off with him repeatedly, and so enraging her husband that he forces him to eat filth; by a woman continuing to bear children after her son has married a girl who has reached puberty; and by any other manifestation of 'pride' (*amatingo*). Their shocked astonishment is held to bring on the wrong-doer their chilling 'breath' which causes sterility, paralysis, or some other lingering illness, or makes the child of a woman who has insulted her mother-in-law, or peeped at her father-in-law, thin and sickly.

'If a woman should look at her father-in-law on purpose her friends shout at her and say: "You are proud (*namatingo*) you look on your father-in-law." Then she won't get children or her child falls ill. It is true also that if she says the name or looks on a father-in-law she will have difficulty when she comes to die. . . . She might die slowly and in pain or she might be old and weary and wish to die, and not be able to do so. . . . It is "the breath of men" that causes her child to be ill. If the father-in-law on whom she looked said nothing about it nothing would happen, but if he told his friends then the woman's child would be made ill by "the breath of men"—the child the woman was carrying when she saw the man, or her first-born child, would suffer' (cf. Document, p. 236).

Another informant said: 'Suppose that a man dies leaving a young son, and his brother, the heir, refuses to give this boy a cow for milk or, later, cows for marriage, then the dead man comes in a dream to the heir and reproaches him. Then he, the heir, fetches his wife and tells her: "We must give him (the ward) a cow, my brother came to me by night and reproached me," and so he will give the boy a cow. If he still refuses to do so, his fellows in the village, fellows of his elder brother (the heir having taken over the elder brother's homestead) will pass judgement on him and there will be much "breath". And if he refuses to provide marriage-cattle for his brother's son and provides them

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for his own son whom he begot saying: "He is my own flesh and blood", then the men of the village will pass judgement.'

This 'breath' is thought also to fall on a chief who is harsh towards his people, or who acts unconstitutionally, as in refusing to make a 'coming out' ceremony for his sons when his village headmen advise him; and it falls on a village headman who treats a junior in office unfairly, or is overbearing to his men. Both pagan and Christian informants insisted that fear of 'the breath of men' was a powerful sanction in the traditional system against arbitrary rule. Asagene, a Christian deacon, himself raised the subject one day and said: 'Headmen and chiefs—pagans—would be hard on their people and seize their goods if they (the headmen and chiefs) did not fear witchcraft. Witchcraft is like God to them.'

At every point the solidarity of the village is emphasized; the neighbours themselves are held to be insulted by the bad behaviour of a son—'their son'—to one of their fellows, or by a woman 'soiling their son', or by an heir failing to recognize their concern in the inheritance of a deceased fellow. For example, Mwakanyamale had begotten no child for ten years, and this was attributed to the fact that, after quarrelling with his elder brother and refusing to attend his funeral, he had not admitted his fault to the men of the village when he came back and killed a cow. His impotence was attributed to their curse.

As we have seen, recovery is thought to depend (i) upon the wrong-doer reforming and providing the men of the village, which is angry, with a bull or beer for a feast, acknowledging guilt as he does so; and (ii) upon the men of the village admitting their anger and responsibility for his illness, and expressing good will. 'If a daughter-in-law should have looked on her father-in-law by mistake she makes beer and sends it to her father-in-law. He calls his friends and admits: "Indeed I was angry with her for she looked at me", and the others say: "Yes, indeed, let her child get fat".' (*vide* pp. 235-6).

It may well be asked, is there any objective reality at the root of this belief in 'the breath of men'? Does the wrong-doer, fearing his neighbours, really become paralysed or impotent? It is possible that a sinner may sometimes develop these symptoms as the result of fear. We do not know, what is certain is that impotence, sterility, lingering illnesses including paralysis, and sickly

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children, are not uncommon; that the penalty of sin is believed often to be delayed, and an illness may be attributed to a wrong committed many years previously; and lastly, that the victim of retribution may be one of several individuals. Parents are thought to be punished by the sickness of their children as well as in their own persons; in a case of sexual transgression it may be either partner who suffers; in the case of a neglected death ritual it may be either the heir or the widow on whose behalf it should have been performed (cf. Document, pp. 206, 236–7). When a woman bears a child after her son is married to a girl who has reached puberty, it is thought that she may fall ill herself, or her husband may be cursed 'because he had agreed to his son marrying a grown girl before the son's mother had grown old'; or the son may have no children because he eloped with his wife, or has 'married a grown girl when his father had only agreed that he should be betrothed to a little girl'.

A lively fear of witchcraft and of the 'breath of men' is inculcated in Nyakyusa children when quite young; Mwaikambo, a Christian, explained that boys learn about witchcraft from their senior play-mates when they are out herding, and in the hut at night in the boys' village, when tales are told. 'Then one fears in one's stomach and thinks: "Father! perhaps I, also, will be eaten by witches." ' Ambilikile, another Christian informant, confirmed this, saying: 'We learn about witches from comments on cases of sickness, and from tales. When someone has died people say: "He was a witch, we found a python." Or perhaps of another it is said that "the witches had eaten him". In these tales the witches are said to have eaten people, or speared them, by means of witchcraft, so that the victim dies. We are also told how the witches fight in the power of witchcraft with their fellows from other villages, and how they fly on their pythons. What we hear always makes witchcraft awe-inspiring. I feared it very much.'

We had ample evidence that for most Nyakyusa the fear of witchcraft and of 'the breath of men' continues throughout life, and that it directly affects behaviour. It is, perhaps, the main sanction for moral behaviour within the village.

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621 cannot be appointed as headman in any village of his own generation, and villages of past generations disappear. When a headman 769 dies, his village still being in existence, his place is taken by his 622 heir who may be a son, but this office is only temporary. The village ceases to exist when its original members die off. Moreover, there is no suggestion that the shade of a headman's father broods over the village as the shade of a chief is thought to brood over the land he ruled.

775 The Nyakyusa have a lively belief in the power of shades, a belief closely connected with the dependence of the members of a lineage upon one another for cattle,[1] and with the office of 'divine king', but such belief scarcely affects village relationships, for the shades are not thought to be concerned with behaviour between neighbours, as distinct from relatives.

775 It is true that the proper performance of family rituals includes feasting neighbours, but the implication always is that the shades 621 are concerned only in enforcing obligations towards themselves 602 and fellow kinsmen, not towards non-relatives. On the other hand, neighbours are concerned in the enforcement of kinship obligations. When a son insults his father, the father's neighbours are insulted also; when a daughter-in-law peeps at her father-in-law the shocked astonishment of the neighbours may cause her children to pine. And so, when an erring son begs pardon of his father, he must provide a feast for the neighbours, 'that they may see that his father is satisfied'.

775 A situation often arises in which both the shades and 'the breath of men' operate, sometimes 'the breath' of shocked neighbours ● 626 supporting the shades, and sometimes shades and men each 754 exacting their due. One illustration of this was given us by Kalunda: 'If you do not carry out the burial rites for your father, people are angry, they throttle you, and the shade is angry also, he comes on your body. No, the witches do not call the ancestors to help; both are angry on their own account. To-day the black ones, the witches, come and throttle you; to-morrow the ancestors come. People are angry because they do not eat meat; the shade is angry because you did not perform the burial rites for him. He says: "See, I left much property, why did you not bury me properly?" ' And in discussing the obligation of a daughter-in-

[1] cf. Godfrey Wilson, 'An African Morality', *Africa*, Vol. IX (1936); Monica Wilson, 'Nyakyusa Kinship' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*.

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law to avoid her father-in-law, another informant said: 'It is forbidden to look at fathers-in-law. If we do look then we shall not die well, we shall long to die and not be able to do so, because both those below (the dead) and those above (the living) are angry. Yes, it is the witches we mean when we say "those above".'

c. The age-village and medicines

Unlike the belief in witchcraft and 'the breath of men', which mainly affects relationships within a village, or the ancestor cult which is confined to the relations between kinsmen, and between chief and people, the use of medicines (*imikota*)[1] enters into every type of relationship in Nyakyusa society. Medicines are employed to win success in almost every undertaking: cultivating, herding, hunting, love-making, war. They are regarded as one of the main props of authority; the impressiveness (*ubusisya*) of a chief, and the power of a village headman to command, being directly related to the medicines with which they are treated (*vide supra*, pp. 24–5). They are resorted to for the promotion of fertility, for the treatment of the sick, and for protection and retaliation generally, as well as the means of directly harming an enemy. Medicines are believed to operate along with other mystical powers. For example, they are an essential element in rituals directed to the ancestors, and they are used for the discovery of witchcraft (in the ordeal) as well as for protection against it, and for the treatment of patients thought to have been 'eaten' by the witches or chilled by 'the breath of men'. Used alone, medicines are held to be ineffective against witchcraft or 'the breath of men', but they are regarded as a useful complement to other action, such as the banishment of the witch or the repentance of the sinner.

The power of witchcraft or of defence against witches (*amanga*) is connected with medicines, for it is thought often to be acquired for defensive purposes (and more rarely for aggressive purposes) through drinking medicines (*vide* pp. 25, 221). But the powers of witchcraft, or witch defence, and of medicines are quite distinct; the one implies a peculiar physical condition, the presence of one or more pythons in the belly, whereas the other may be bought from a doctor and used by anyone, and its

[1] The root *-kota* implies something derived from a plant. cf. *iki-kota*, a wooden stool.

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when members of a pagan village embrace Christianity? Orthodox Nyakyusa Christians, that is, those accepting the teaching of the European missionaries of any of the four denominations at work in the area, deny the reality of witchcraft and of 'the breath of men'; they deny the power of any individual to harm another by virtue of 'a python' in the stomach, or to bring illness to his erring neighbour by murmuring with others about him.

As we have already seen, the profession of Christianity and school education tend to coincide among the Nyakyusa, and the educated tend to be sceptical of witchcraft, while believing in sorcery. Such scepticism is directly related to the dogmatic teaching of missionaries, to instruction in physiology in schools, and to the challenge of certain missionaries and Nyakyusa Christians that pagans should prove the existence of witchcraft at autopsies (*vide* Document, p. 254). The suggestion that 'pythons' are really acute tape-worm (*vide supra* p. 92) or an enlarged kidney is typical of the critical attitude of educated Christians to pagan dogma. We have no doubt that belief in witchcraft is weakening, and that this weakening is directly due to mission teaching.

Nevertheless most Christians continue to have some belief in a mystical power exerted by individuals or groups to the harm of others. For a few the contradiction between the traditional and the Christian dogma involves acute mental conflict; for many the conflict is resolved through the concept of 'the curse' (*ikigune*) of the congregation, led by the priest or pastor and elders, and through emphasis on sorcery rather than on witchcraft. Most Christians believe that the just wrath of those set in authority, and of the faithful members of a congregation, may bring misfortune on a sinner. They argue that the power which punishes the wrong-doer comes from God, not from ancestors or from pythons in men's bellies, but that it is brought upon an individual by the anger and murmuring of men.[1] Further, it is believed that

[1] The phrase 'the breath of men' (*embepo sya bandu*) is never used with reference to the punishment of sinners in the Christian congregation, but always 'the curse' (*ikigune*), a word which is used to translate certain phrases in the Gospels, and which conveys an idea felt to be compatible with Christian dogma. As already noted (p. 101) the pagans of the plain and of Selya use 'the curse' (*ikigune*) more or less synonomously with 'the breath of men' (*embepo sya bandu*). For details of cases of misfortune attributed to the curse of Christians see Monica Hunter, 'An African Christian Morality', *Africa*, Vol. X (1937), pp. 265–91.

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Christians are only affected by the shocked astonishment of fellow Christians, not by the disapproval of pagans, and the unit within which 'the curse' is commonly spoken of as operating is the congregation. In two of the cases we recorded (*vide* Document, p. 209) it was suggested that illness was due to the anger of neighbours, fellow Christians, over stinginess and greed, but in the other cases it was not village neighbours who were primarily concerned, but the Christian congregation, a group embracing members from many villages.

The type of behaviour believed to be punishable by 'the curse' of fellow Christians also differs somewhat from that thought to be punished by 'the breath of men'. The virtue Christians emphasize most is chastity, and 'the curse' is often said to be a punishment for fornication or adultery. The other sin commonly spoken of as bringing down a curse is disobedience, or disrespectful behaviour to the minister (or priest) or elder of the congregation. Among pagans 'the breath of men' serves also to sanction sexual morals and to sustain respect for those in authority, but their sex code is different. It is incest, or familiarity between father- and daughter-in-law, which they regard as really evil, not sex relations outside marriage. And they emphasize respect to senior relatives and fathers' neighbours rather than to the leaders of any wider group.

Christians lay much less stress on hospitality to neighbours than pagans, and it is generally agreed that they eat alone more than pagans would dare to do. As one Christian put it, a pagan would *always* call his neighbours to share meat or beer when he had it, but a Christian might eat a sheep, or a goat, or even a calf, alone with his family. It is good, the Christians say, to call friends to share a feast, but not an inescapable obligation. Nor do Christians regularly send the saddle and ribs of any animal they kill to the chief, as pagans do; 'for', they say, 'we do not fear "the breath of men".' But hospitality towards strangers is felt to be a condition of salvation. One informant explained that 'If a man is stingy towards his neighbours it does not matter; but if he is stingy towards a stranger from a distance, he might die from lack of food; and that would be the fault of the stingy one. Such a fault would prevent him from entering Heaven.' This statement points to the most striking difference between Christian and pagan morality—the range of moral obligations. A pagan's duties

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the *umwafi* ordeal who moved, now it is often the man who supposes himself a victim of witchcraft who flies for his life (*vide infra*, pp. 153 ff.); and it is probable that circulation between villages has in this way increased very considerably.

Denying the reality of witchcraft, the British administration ignores the belief in the legitimate use of 'python power' to enforce law and morality, any disputes arising out of this being classed as 'witchcraft'. One case turning on the belief in 'the breath of men' was heard by the District Officer of Tukuyu while we were in the district. The facts, as given us by the District Officer concerned, and by Nyakyusa informants, were as follows:

Mwankuga, a chief, fell sick and one of his sons-in-law, a clerk, advised him to get treatment from the European doctor then investigating tuberculosis in the district. When Mwankuga's junior half-brother heard this he came to Mwankuga, along with others, advised him not to go to a European doctor, and offered to cure him himself. He said that *he* had made Mwankuga ill—'had closed his stomach'—because Mwankuga had refused to make the 'coming out' ceremony for his sons when pressed by his village headmen to do so. Mwankuga's half-brother said 'the country was angry' because of the delay in the 'coming out' ceremony. He insisted that Mwankuga's illness was due to 'the breath' of the whole country, not to the sorcery (*ubutege*) of an individual. Mwankuga acknowledged that he had done wrong in refusing to hold the ceremony, and handed over two cows which his half-brother demanded, receiving in turn medicine, which he drank. Five days later Mwankuga gave his half-brother three more cows which were killed at Mwankuga's homestead and eaten by his people. Then, later on, since he did not recover, and one of his sons for whom the 'coming out' should have been held died, Mwankuga reported the matter to a senior chief, Mwakatumbula, president of the court district in which he lived. Mwakatumbula referred the case to the District Officer, and Mwankuga's half-brother was tried for 'obtaining goods by false pretences', under Section 287 of the Penal Code. The accused denied that he had ever said that he was the cause of Mwankuga's illness, and though the latter brought witnesses, the District Officer found that their testimony was 'not sufficiently reliable to substantiate the charge', and 'that there was no reason to suppose that the accused had acted in bad faith'. He referred the

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case back to Mwakatumbula's court 'for investigation for an offence under Native Law and Custom'. Two points which came out in the examination before the District Officer are significant. First, Mwankuga readily admitted that he had done wrong in delaying the 'coming out' ceremony. He said to the court: 'I did wrong in refusing to hold the *ubusoka*, I did wrong.' Secondly, the court (i.e. the Nyakyusa assessors) specifically inquired whether or not Mwankuga's half-brother had got his share of the meat provided by Mwankuga. It emerged that he had eaten some meat, but the witnesses were not clear as to how much he had got.

When the case came up again before the Native Court the general opinion was: 'The son of the chief has died. They (i.e. the witches) have "eaten" him. The chief himself has been ill because he refused to hold the "coming out" ceremony.'

Two other so-called 'witchcraft' cases came before the District Officer while we were in Tukuyu District. One turned on the use of vengeance magic to collect a debt, the doctor who had supplied the medicines being the accused (see Document, p. 213). The Nyakyusa view that only the individual who has commissioned a doctor to work sorcery on his behalf, and not the doctor himself, is guilty, if death from sorcery (or poisoning) has been proved, is not, of course, accepted by the Administration. In the other case a Sangu doctor told two individuals that they were threatened with 'witchcraft' and got cattle from them in return for his supposed protection. He was expelled from the district (see Document, pp. 258–61).

The difficulties of administration in this field are obvious. No one with a background of western science can admit the reality of witchcraft or 'the breath of men', as defined by the Nyakyusa, or the possibility of discovering truth through the *umwafi* ordeal. Yet prohibition of the ordeal, when belief in witchcraft is so strong, breeds a sense of insecurity. The only solution is to kill the belief in witchcraft. As we have shown, it is somewhat weakened by elementary education and Christian teaching; and we believe that its disappearance turns on increasing technical control, particularly in the field of disease, on scientific education, and on the development of impersonal relationships.[1]

[1] cf. G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 88–95, 102–4.

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CHAPTER VI

THE MAINTENANCE OF ORDER

626 VARIOUS forms of social pressure which serve to maintain order in the village have already been discussed: economic reciprocity, the need to be approved, and a supposed mystical interdependence are the foundation of order. We have shown that neighbours depend upon each other for help in many undertakings, that prestige accrues to affability and generosity, that men fear to shock their neighbours lest sickness fall on them, and that they admonish their children not to be proud and quarrelsome lest they be accused of practising witchcraft. The desire for prestige and the fear of sickness, or of gaining the reputation of being a witch, directly modify behaviour towards neighbours. Nevertheless, disputes between fellow villagers occur, and there is a regular legal mechanism for dealing with them.

a. Arbitration

627 The Nyakyusa set great store on arbitration by a friend. It is common practice for individuals who have quarrelled to state their dispute before a respected friend and ask for his opinion on the case. The statement is made in public and any man who happens to be present may offer an opinion. There is no attempt to hush up a quarrel—rather it is held that the expression of it paves the way for reconciliation—and the emphasis is laid on arriving at a settlement which is agreed to by both parties. Arbitration of this sort begins in the herd-group when two small boys will take their dispute to a fellow, the leader of their group, and the practice continues throughout their lives in the villages of youths, mature men, and elders. The respected friend to whom the case is first submitted is most often the leader of the village-section to which one or both parties to the dispute belong. But he need not necessarily be an appointed leader; any respected man may be asked to arbitrate. If his decision is not accepted by

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to rejoin the group in which he is 'known', in which he has 'friends with whom he herded cattle as a boy', as that which provides the chief impetus to return. Never once did an informant suggest friction with the village headman as the reason for moving[1] or loyalty to a former headman as the reason for returning. The Nyakyusa village is in no way the personal following of a headman, as the villages of some other central African peoples (such as the Bemba,[2] Yao, and Ngoni[3]) appear to be. It is essentially a group of equals, established before adolescence, whose stability and continuity turn on friendship and co-operation between its members. It is already a corporate group, with very close bonds forged through years between its members, before the permanent leader is chosen, and it continues as a group though its leader dies or moves.

We do not deny that the personality of the village headman—particularly his generosity and his skill in settling disputes between his men—affects the stability and growth of the village; some villages increase noticeably in size after the 'coming out', while others shrink, and headmen (like chiefs) use medicines to attract men to them; but the Nyakyusa themselves imply that it is the character of the villagers rather than the character of the headman which determines movement to and from the village.

The headman, like any private individual in the village, must remain on good terms with the other members lest *he* be driven out. A number of cases were cited in which headmen had moved because they had become unpopular with their men and feared their 'breath' or witchcraft (*vide* pp. 204–8; 268–70) but most of them had returned after the lapse of a little time.

What private individuals and headmen alike fear is not a quarrel with one individual, but the disapproval of the village or village-section as a whole; for 'the breath of men' is but the crystallization of adverse public opinion. The man who has the support of his fellows in a dispute with one neighbour is shielded in 'the war by night'.

[1] Personal friction with a chief occurs (*vide* pp. 191–2).

[2] A. I. Richards, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, pp. 110 ff.

[3] M. Gluckman, J. C. Mitchell, and J. A. Barnes, 'The Village Headman in British Central Africa', *Africa*, Vol. XIX (1949), pp. 91, 98, 100.

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754 area, during a given period, so we cannot either assert or deny that accusations of witchcraft are more frequent in age-villages than in kinship villages.

578 621 602 There are two sets of loyalties in Nyakyusa society: those to a kinship group and those to an age-village. Does conflict arise from a clash between them? We have no evidence that it does. It is true that kin may support a sick relative against his age-group, referring to his illness as due to witchcraft, whereas neighbours will attribute it to his own sin and their legitimate anger; but very often the ancestors and the 'defenders' are believed to work together to punish wrong-doers—those who break avoidance and incest taboos, those who insult seniors, those who neglect traditional rituals (*vide supra*, p. 122). Amity between relatives is sanctioned by neighbours as well as by senior kinsmen, and the importance of enjoying the company of village mates is constantly stressed by relatives. Where a village does appear to support a member against his kin, it is usually on the side of the ancestors and 'justice', in terms of the Nyakyusa code, as when neighbours share a father's anger at the insolence of his son, or after his death protect his son against unjust treatment by the heir. The values of village solidarity and of kinship solidarity are thus coherent.

e. The form of witch beliefs

621 754 626 There is, however, a connection between the age-village organization and the *form* of witch beliefs. As we have seen, great emphasis is laid on feasting neighbours, and it is believed that the impulse to witchcraft comes from the lust for milk and meat. The Nyakyusa argue thus: witchcraft comes from neighbours, and neighbours must be fed or they get angry; feeding a witch on milk or beef pacifies him (*vide supra*, p. 92). An explicit connection is made between neglecting to provide feasts on the proper occasions and suffering from 'the breath' of justly angry neighbours whose blighting power springs from the same root as witchcraft. The contrast with the witch beliefs of the Pondo is marked: among them it is held that the drive to witchcraft is sex lust, and all witches have familiars with whom they have sex relations.[1]

[1] Hunter, op. cit., pp. 275–88.

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754 akin to witchcraft and distinct from the power of senior relatives is used to punish wrong-doers and to protect[1] the village from witches, and in the belief that village headmen are foremost among 'the defenders'.

626 789 The closest parallel to the Nyakyusa concept of 'the breath of men' of which we have evidence in Africa is the belief in the 'conditional curse' among the Meru, Embu, and Kikuyu people. Lambert shows that the main sanction enforcing the judgement of the Council of Elders among the Meru people was the belief that its curse brought misfortune, and he was told in Embu that the Warriors' Council has a similar power over warriors.[2] Kenyatta shows tha among the Kikuyu the conditional curse was used to protect beacons, to enforce the judgement of the Council of Elders, and to guard against bribery.[3] As we have seen, the Nyakyusa of the plain also use a word *ikigune*, which is best translated as 'the curse', when the people of the hills use the phrase 'the breath of men' (*vide supra*, p. 101), and whatever phrase is used the implication is that misfortune comes from the shocked astonishment and the anger of neighbours (or father's neighbours) which has been expressed in 'murmuring'. In the Nyakyusa view a formal cursing is not necessary to bring down misfortune, but the anger must be *expressed* (*vide supra*, p. 106). A belief in the legitimate exercise of mystical power by contemporaries or seniors to punish non-relatives thus appears in four societies with highly developed age-organizations, and further field-work may show that the two are always coincident.

626 However that may be, the belief in 'the curse' (or 'the breath of men') among the Nyakyusa is shaped by the fact that villages are occupied by age-sets. The social function of 'the breath of men' in a Nyakyusa age-village is strictly parallel to that of the mystical power of senior relatives in a kinship village. Where, as among most African peoples, the neighbours are kinsmen, no distinction is made between the mystical effects of the legitimate

[1] There are indications that the power of witchcraft is thought sometimes to be used for defence among the Thonga (Junod, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 510, 516), and the Azande (Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., pp. 129-30) but the idea does not apparently bulk large, and there is no suggestion of a similar power being used to punish wrong-doers.

H. E. Lambert, *The Use of Indigenous Authorities in Tribal Administration* (Communications from the School of African Studies, University of Cape Town), pp. 9-10, 14-15.

[3] J. Kenyatta, op. cit., pp. 39-40, 221-2.

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anger of neighbours on the one hand, and of kinsmen on the other.

The idea that a Nyakyusa village headman has the mystical power called *amanga*, and leads the attacks of justly enraged neighbours, gives him a position in his village comparable to that of the headman who, among many African peoples, is the senior kinsman in his village. Each has mystical power over the members of his village, and the fact that the Nyakyusa headman's power is derived from 'a python in the stomach', and operates like witchcraft, while the power of a senior kinsman derives from his birth, and operates through the shades, makes relatively little difference to the relations of the village headman with his people.

The Nyakyusa system is peculiar in that the village headman is foremost as the discoverer of, and defender against, witches; he combines the functions fulfilled elsewhere by the village headman and the witch-doctor. The protection which kinship villages in other African cultures seek on the one hand from their ancestors, and on the other from the witch-doctor,[1] the Nyakyusa look for from their village headmen. Doctors who claim to discover witches, and provide medicines for protection against them, exist in Nyakyusa society; some, at least, of them are spoken of as having *amanga*—the same mystical power as the headmen have—through which they are enabled to see and fight the witches; but witch-doctors play a much smaller part than they do among the Azande or the Pondo; in the battle against witches they are quite overshadowed by the village headmen. Defence against witchcraft is a village affair, and the foremost 'defenders' (*abamanga*) are the political authorities. Village rituals directed to the ancestors are conspicuously absent among the Nyakyusa, and our hypothesis is that this absence, together with the belief that the 'python power' of village headmen and others is used to punish wrong-doers and defend the innocent within their village, is dependent upon the age-village organization, in which neighbours are not kinsmen and the position of village headman is not hereditary.

[1] cf. Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., pp. 161–82, 251; Junod, op. cit., pp. 505, 516–8. The Thonga 'magician' is also believed to fly and know the witches, because he shares their power.

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(b) *'The Breath of Men.'*

MISFORTUNES ATTRIBUTED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES—contd.

No.	Category of Sufferer	Symptoms	Alleged sin	Diagnosis	Ritual performed
1	Village headman (Mwanilupula)	(a) 2 children died (b) Further deaths among his children after he moved	Grudged neighbours certain food Failed to perform death ritual of children before leaving		Fled to Lake-shore plain (Mu Ngonde) Returned home. Killed bull. Admitted fault in not performing ritual
2	Widow	Widow ailing	Ritual not performed for her at inheritance	Illness due to 'the breath of men'. Diagnosis by divination	Heir killed beast. Feasted neighbours and relatives. Told of illness. People admitted their anger.[1] Said the illness was finished. She continued ill.
3	Widow	Widow ill	Heir of chief's family had not killed bull or cow at inheritance ritual	Illness due to 'the breath of men' Diagnosis by divination	Heir called neighbours and relatives. Killed. Neighbours admitted their anger
4	Ennsi	Ennsi ill	Father failed to send a gift of food and beer, when she was taken back to her husband, and she is the daughter of a chief's sister	'The breath' comes from her husband's friends. 'They are angry because of the quarrel over food'	None mentioned. The girl died shortly afterwards and her death was attributed to sorcery
5	Chief	T.B.?	Refused to hold 'coming out' of sons	'The country was angry'	Killed 3 cows for people to feast
6	Married woman	Bore no more children	Ran off with lover three times. Finally husband forced lover to eat filth	His father's village 'shocked' because she had 'smelled a man so much'. 'Breath' of village effective because she visits there frequently to see a grandparent. This the diagnosis of the doctor to whom she went for medicines that she might bear children	None mentioned
7	Man (a doctor)	Begotten no child for 10 years	Did not come to bury elder brother with whom he had quarrelled	'The men (of his elder brother's village) were angry. Illness due to the curse (*ihigwe*) of men'	Killed a cow in elder brother's village but did not tell the men of the village about it properly (i.e. about his fault)
8	Man (A)	Man ill for 2 years (with syphilis), eye came out of socket	Incest—man lover of father's sister	All men were astounded and cursed A	A killed 4 cows at father's place. Relatives and neighbours ate after cursing at him. A recovered quickly. (He had also been treated in a mission hospital.)

[1] *Ukwijaja* — to complain. The implication is that they expressed, and so got rid of, their anger (cf. pp. 99–101).

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(b) *'The Breath of Men.'—contd.* MISFORTUNES ATTRIBUTED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES—contd.

No.	Category of Sufferer	Symptoms	Alleged sin	Diagnosis	Ritual performed
9	Senior Village Headman	Paralysed	He encouraged chief to expel junior headman from country when latter [illegible]	'Illness of senior headman due to the breath of his junior colleague. He was cursed because he was reputed to be the favourite of the chief.' Diagnosis by divination	Bull and beer provided by junior headman. He and senior headman made friends
10	Woman	Unable to walk	Told by villagers (*amafumu*) to choose heir of her brother. Refused to do so, asking them to choose	'They (villagers) cursed her'	Nothing yet done. Thought that villagers will deny responsibility, saying: 'It is not our illness' if offered a cow
11	Woman	Her baby ill	Insulted husband's mother	Illness diagnosed as '*ingoto*,' a disease due to 'the breath of man'. No divination; 'knew themselves'.	Woman and child given medicines by a doctor. Woman's father brought a cow for the mother-in-law she insulted.
12	Headman of young men	Ill a long time and still ill	He and his young men built in the village of their fathers before fathers had moved	Illness due to 'the breath of men' (the fathers) because he seized another's office as headman by building in his village. Diagnosis by divination	Nil. Should have asked old men to bless him
13	Heir (son)	Ill a year. Died the next year	Did not drink father's funeral beer in father's village. 'Others ate the food'	Village angry. Their breath fell on him when he came to fetch away property. Diagnosis by divination	After a year's illness, killed a bull. Ate with friends and relatives in father's village
14	Man	Died	Killed large bull for his children (sacrifice to ancestors) and gave only one leg to neighbours	'Perhaps (he died) because he grudged his fellow villagers meat. Neighbours are shocked if a man kills and does not call them to feast'	
15	Woman	Her child ill	Swore at her husband	Illness diagnosed as *ngoto* (an illness due to 'the breath of men'). Diagnosis by divination	Admission of sin. Woman's father gave her millet to brew beer. Her husband called his fellows to drink and admit their anger and speak about the child's recovery (cf. p. 236)
16	Younger brother of chief	Died	Claimed to be a chief	People said 'breath of men'. Family said witchcraft. Diagnosis by divination	

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(b) *'The Breath of Men.' contd.* MISFORTUNES ATTRIBUTED TO MYSTICAL CAUSES—contd.

No.	Category of Sufferer	Symptoms	Alleged sin	Diagnosis	Ritual performed
17	Village headman	Hurt his hand on a stone directly he reached the Lupa to work	Had left for work without the agreement of his people	'Country was angry because he was a headman' (and had gone to work)	None. Died shortly afterwards. Death attributed to witchcraft of fellow workers (*cf.* cases of witchcraft No. 22)
18	Young chief Mwankuga heir of his deceased senior brother and so heir to chieftainship	Did not beget a son by his inherited wives	Not specified	Village headmen angry so medicine chief has taken not effective. The headmen showed their anger by not taking chief to doctor as they should have done. He went alone	None when case recorded
19	Kasitile, hereditary priest (of chief's lineage)	Kasitile ill	Did not cook for his village neighbours. 'They complained because I, a great chief, did not cook food for them'	Fell ill night after attending a beer drink at a neighbour's house	Feasted neighbours. Treated by a doctor
20	Kasitile	Kasitile had worms	Provided 1 pot of beer for fellow priests when he should have provided 4 pots or a calf	Sickness due to wrath of men. Diagnosis of a doctor	
21	Kasitile	Kasitile ill	Cut down a sacred tree which he should not have cut	'The whole country is angry'. 'Priests and village headmen are angry'	Feasted other priests on meat and beer
22	Village headman, Nsusa	His cow drowned	Ordered to pay a fine for slander or move, and refused. Complained to the District Officer	'All the village headmen are angry'	Nsusa moved. Later brought home (cf. pp. 268–9)
23	Man (junior brother of chief)	Died	He had cut one branch for an axe-handle from a self-sown tree growing in the cultivated land of a village in which he was a new-comer. He had not asked the villagers' permission to cut wood as he should have done.	'The "owners" of the village were angry and killed him'	None recorded

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18. GROUNDS OF ACCUSATION OF WITCHCRAFT

An elderly Christian man.

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● 626 'The pagans are afraid of what they dream, and secondly, if they have quarrelled with a man and they fall sick they at once think he is throttling them.'

'Without dreams of him?'

'Yes.

'Then again, if a man is given milk by his neighbours and yet goes round in other villages, complaining: "They grudge me milk. I don't drink their milk", and his neighbours hear of it, they say to him "What do you mean by saying we grudge you milk? Scandal-mongering is bad. Indeed, you are a witch." And then, as soon as the cows fall sick, they point to him: "That is the witch who is throttling the cattle." And they drive him out. Yes, without dreams.

'What our parents used to say to us when discussing these things was this: "Pride! If a man is proud and is not sociable with his neighbours; if he boasts, saying: 'I am someone, and others are not people at all,' then we say he is a witch." And if ever the cows fall sick or go dry, then we point to him as the witch who is throttling them and drive him away. This happens without dreams, too.

'And then again, if one man has quarrelled with another and the other falls sick, they may say the one is a witch and drive him out. Perhaps if he was a man of Mwaipopo he goes to live in Mwangomo's country (that of a neighbouring chief). Then one day a man of Mwaipopo's goes to his new village and talks to the people: "I see that you have received so and so here. We drove him out as a witch. He's a great witch, that man." And so when next the cows fall sick or someone dies, they point to him as a witch and drive him away again. Then he goes right up to Mwangoka's (twenty-five miles away) and again someone from Mwaipopo's or Mwangomo's comes up there and repeats the story. A little later the same thing happens and he is driven out again.'

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19. THINGS WHICH ARE SAID TO ANGER THE WITCHES AND MAKE THEM THROTTLE US

Mwaisumo (clerk):

'Carrying very heavy loads, frequently. They (the witches) wonder (*ukukiba*) at a person and he (or she) falls ill.'

'Hoeing a very large field, surpassing others.'

'Being more wealthy, as by earning money on the Lupa, like Bingibamo and Kiputa.'

'Boasting at work, saying: "I am the senior" like Ramsay and Isiah at Tukuyu.'

'Eating fine food alone. This may be meat, when you have killed a bull or cow, or beer or gifts of food from in-laws, or any other fine food. Mwambuputa was accused of doing this.'

'People are always afraid to carry very heavy things because they think that others will be angry and wonder at it (*ukukiba*). Their astonishment causes illness. Women especially speak of this a great deal when they are fetching firewood. If they carry a very big load others express wonder saying: "It is God who has given you strength surpassing us all." This astonishment brings on serious illness. People fall ill and some even die. Formerly people feared very much to speak to someone who carried a heavy load, saying: "You carry a very heavy load"; they were likely to be fined if they did, because the person to whom they said it would complain, saying: "He wondered at me. He brings down illness on me; he brings the witches by saying I am a strong fellow."

'It is like this also in hoeing; if a man has hoed much he fears lest they (the witches) will kill him; if people say: "He has surpassed us in strength" and are angry, that is what happens—the man falls ill and may die.

'Surpassing others in possessions is said also to anger other people, witches, who kill their fellow because they think that he has a medicine (*unkota*) which enables him to surpass them in wealth. The medicine for surpassing others is the medicine of good fortune (*unkota gwa lusako*). There was a case like this among the Nyangomo—the case of a young man who died quite recently. His name was Bingibamo, the son of Kiputa. This young man was in employment on the Lupa gold-fields . . . and he sent back money to his father to buy cattle. When he had been working for a certain European for a short time

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only he surpassed the other workers as they searched for gold, and found a very big nugget. He saw it first and picked it up immediately. All the others wished to share it; they all went together to their European (employer) to say that their fellow did not find this nugget alone, but that they had all got it. The employer said: "Yes, of course I shall pay you all for sifting, but he found it. He picked it up. I shall give him something separately." So he gave Bingibamo 100s. and to each of the others he gave 6s. The next morning Bingibamo was ill; the following day he died and they buried him. It is said that his fellows "ate" him, they were angry about the nugget he had got. And those who work there (on the Lupa) regularly say that no one who gets a nugget ever escapes; those who get money always die.

'It is said that one who boasts at work saying that he has surpassed his fellows in wisdom and seniority dies like Ramsay, who was a clerk at Tukuyu, and Isiah Mwagomba. They died. Some say privately that the sin (*inongwa*) which killed them was boasting—they boasted very much to their fellows. Some say that there is one man among them (the clerks at Tukuyu) who always kills his fellows if they seem likely to surpass him in seniority (i.e. importance). A boastful man (*gwalwitufyo*) is always proud (*gwamatingo*), and as for enjoying the company of his fellows he does not keep on good terms with them at all (*atikwangala nabo kanunu*).

'Eating fine food alone is said to kill a man. If you have killed a bull to eat you must give your fellows some, because if you grudge them they will summon the witches to "eat" you. That is to say the people who saw you will tell of it and at night "the defenders" will be angry and summon the witches to "eat" you. Or when your in-laws bring something when they visit you, and you do not call your fellows, but grudge them a share they will "eat" you, as happened in the case of Mwambuputa. It is said that Mwambuputa grudged his fellows certain food, so they were very angry and two of his children died at home. When he found that sickness was spreading at his homestead he fled to the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde), but there also he found that death pursued him and he returned home again. It is said that sickness pursued him to the plain because he went off without performing the death ritual for the children who died. So when he returned he found two bulls and killed them, saying: "Friends, I have come. I did wrong because I did not perform the ritual for your children with you." '

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20. THREATS OF WITCHCRAFT

Mwaisumo (clerk).

'It is said that some witches show themselves openly. When he is angry with his fellow a witch may say openly "*Uligwaki?*" (literally: "What are you?") and his fellow takes ill in the evening, sickness falls on him. Or one who makes love to a woman repeatedly and is refused by her, may say: "Woman, what are you? (*uligwaki?*) You are very proud, you fancy yourself, thinking that you are more beautiful than all others. Dance and show off—we shall see in what a pleasant fashion."

'It is now forbidden, as it was in the past, to swear at (*ukufinga*) a person without cause, saying: "What are you?" If someone speaks before others, and the person sworn at is quarrelsome, the man who swears is fined. The man sworn at will go to law, saying: "My fellow swears at men; I do not know what I have taken of his, he wants to make me ill by swearing at me." Sometimes, also, if he does not wish to be paid, he calls one before the court, or before neighbours to say: "This fellow of mine has sworn at me, if anything happens it is he who is responsible." Meaning that if he falls ill that evening it is this fellow who has caused the illness. And some, when they have recovered, make a case, saying: "It is this fellow", and bring him before the village headman accusing him. If he is found guilty he will pay perhaps a bull. Such tales are told, especially by our mothers, teaching us in childhood that it is forbidden to threaten a friend with witchcraft (*ukumfinga unnino bulosi*).[1] If you swear at your friend and he falls ill that evening then he will say it was you who swore at him.

'But there are some who wish to be feared and thought witches who constantly threaten people. Such a man says: "What are you? You *may* sleep or may not (*ulikagone*), I do not know!" but in great secrecy. Or perhaps sometimes he speaks, saying: "You! Leave me!" He knows that those who are there will tell (his enemy)'

Andambike (a young Christian man).

'Some boast of witchcraft, they praise themselves on account of knowledge, or food, or their homestead . . . saying that no one else has built so well; others praise themselves on account of their fields,

[1] *Ukufinga* means to swear to a statement. In this context it is better translated 'to threaten'.

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and many things of that sort. . . . I once asked an elderly pagan if it were really true that witchcraft existed. The old man replied: "No, it does not exist, and the reason why I say that is this: Once a man hated his fellows and they were angry, and met at his place. (According to the pagan custom when your fellows are angry they gather at your home and they cut leaves; if you do not move you will die, or perhaps something will happen.) When they had met together at his place they said: 'Perhaps you may sleep or may not!' (implying you will not sleep on account of witchcraft.) When they had gone the man threw away all the leaves on which they had been sitting, the leaves which they say bring sickness to a home.[1] He slept, but those who talked about it said: 'He will not escape, for the custom which has been carried out against him is fatal.' He waited and slept again. The next day he was still well. Then I, for my part, understood that witchcraft does not exist, those men boasted, saying: 'Perhaps you may sleep or may not', but nothing happened. They just wished to frighten him. And one day I myself tried to frighten a certain man. His cow had eaten my seed so I went to his house and complained that his cow had got into my food. The next day again the cow ate my seed again. So then I was angry and said to myself, 'I'll frighten this fellow.' When I said: 'Why is your cow in my seed again?' he replied: 'I don't know. Do *I* herd?' So I said: 'My child, perhaps you may sleep or may not when you answer like that!'

"He said: 'Are you a witch then?'

"I said: 'You thought I was just talking. Know that I am talking to you here angry enough to wish to fight with you, so if you are strong in body you will overcome me at night in dreams.' And I went to tell a neighbour that my child perhaps might sleep, or might not, and not to be startled the next day if something happened to that child of mine. That night I blew a calabash trumpet that he should think I was coming and tremble. When he heard it he set off by night, saying:

[1] Mwaisumo commenting on this said: 'When, as boys, we went round in groups eating at one another's homes we were told by our mothers not to cut too many leaves, but just enough for us to use (to sit on). It's forbidden, they said, to strew leaves at a home. It looks as if there were something against the owners of the homestead, you foretell bad fortune, perhaps sickness or death. So, likewise, if I go to visit a sick friend that does not affect his recovery, but if I shed tears because he is sick men say: "It is forbidden (to weep), you foretell misfortune, perhaps he will die (because you weep)." And here (in the case recounted) the the leaves were a sign that this man had a case against him. Others wonder, asking: "What has happened, what has happened?" It is said that when people wonder something will happen on account of their astonishment. If they know that there is a ritual or a funeral all is well, but if nothing is known then questions are asked, something will happen because people wonder, that is people from other villages, not the neighbours of those who have a case against them.'

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'Wives, let us die from our own disease, not this one, pick up the pot and leave it with someone else immediately, we are leaving this home, he is not going to find anyone.' They hid the pot by night, and they moved. A child died after they had arrived at the place to which they moved.

"So I began to understand that witchcraft does not exist but that we die of fear. See, I am not a witch at all, I just tried to frighten that man, but their fear killed them. As for frightening people with witchcraft, we frighten them that they may respect us, or that we may get what we want to eat, they think that if they grudge us they will be throttled by witches."

'The old man who told me (Andambike) this is still alive, living in the country of Kilwa, MuNgonde, in Korosso's chiefdom.'

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22. 'THE BREATH OF MEN'

Mwaisumo (clerk).

'"The breath of men" is a very serious illness; if a person is ill from "the breath of men" he is in great trouble. Such a person never recovers until they pray (*bikwikemesya*). This illness comes especially when a man enters into his inheritance but does not perform the ritual, perhaps to bury him from whom he inherited—his father, or elder brother, or perhaps his mother's brother. As in the case of the estate of our mother's brother, Mwakaliku. When Mwambilike (informant's elder brother) inherited the woman Kyando, he did not perform the ritual for her. The woman was constantly ailing, but no one knew that she was suffering from this illness until they went to divine and found that she was ill from "the breath" because no ritual had been performed for her from the time she was inherited until now. So Mwambilike found a cow and called together all his dependants and his fellows in the village, and he killed the cow and told everyone about this illness. Then people "complained" (*ukwijaja*), and said: "Indeed, may this illness finish." (It was neighbours who complained, not relatives.) From that time the woman concerned has never been ill again. So everyone says: "In truth, 'the breath of men' is very great."

'This illness is very serious, but it never kills people, though they are ill for a long time. If it is not discovered that this is the cause, the patient will be ill for a very long time, perhaps for two or three years. Yes, sometimes it kills when it has spread in the homestead, but people very rarely die from this illness.

'It is often seen in connection with inheritance. Another case occurred in my country. A certain man built with us who was of a chief's lineage. He inherited from a relative but he did not kill a cow at the death ritual. The wife he inherited was constantly ill until they went to divine and found that it was "the breath of men" (which was making her ill) because he had not performed a ritual since he entered into his inheritance. So he also found a cow and called people (non-relatives) and all his descendants, and killed the cow, and his fellow villagers "complained" (*ukwijaja*). But I do not know whether the illness finished or not. What I do know is that he found a cow—I saw it myself when it was lying there dead and people gathered, relatives, descendants, and neighbours.

'*Ingoto* is a disease of children. It comes from the insults used by the mother of the child. It is commonly said that when a married

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753 626 woman has been angry with her husband, and perhaps quarrelled with him, and has sworn at her husband by "the things" (i.e. the sex organs) of his mother, or perhaps his father, the child she bears will fall sick with *ingoto*. It becomes very thin and does not grow. The disease is recognized when a child is very ill from infancy, and it is very thin but does not die. Then they say it is *ingoto*. Sometimes they inquire of [787] a diviner and the diviner reveals that it is ill of *ingoto*.

'I remember a certain woman who was married to a man, Akayamba. This man had married two wives, and she of whom I speak was the third. This woman was very proud (*namatingo fijo*) and was con- [578] stantly quarrelling with her husband and her co-wives. When she quarrelled with her husband he got angry and beat her. Then she swore at him horribly, about "the things" of his mother or father. She said: "You! So and so of your father! So and so of your mother!" Then this woman bore a girl child and when it had grown a little it became very ill. It was very ill for a whole year. When it began to recover she quarrelled again with her husband and swore at him insultingly, and the child got ill again. So her husband (the father of [787] the child) and she went to inquire of a diviner. The divination revealed *ingoto*. It said: "Your wife has sworn at you about the things of your mother when you were quarrelling." When they got home the husband drove his wife away, saying: "Go to your father!" When she got home the woman told her father everything and he took millet and gave it to her to make beer with which to pay. So she brewed beer and brought it to her husband, saying: "I did wrong, my husband." Her husband called his fellows and they all drank the beer and expressed their anger (*ukwijaja*) and said: "May the child recover and grow well!"

'This happened when I was 13 or 14 years old. The girl (who was ill) is still alive; her body shows signs of not having grown properly.

'The disease comes from "the breath of men" because these insults were made publicly and others heard them. I do not think anything would happen if the insults were private, I am not sure.'

A curse of neighbours for neglect of rituals.
Angombwike (young Christian man).

789 626 842 'If I do not do the (death) ritual properly for my father the death of my children is due to the case against me, the dispute with relatives and the curse of people—non-relatives (*nongwa mbukamu, ikigune mbandu*).

'Sometimes the villagers (*amafumu*) bind a man's loins so that he cannot beget children with his wife. They are both sterile. Mwakaná-

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male, the doctor in Selya, is a case of this. He had quarrelled with his elder brother and did not come to bury him. Later he came and killed a cow, but did not tell the men of the village (*amafumu*) properly, and they were angry, and so for the last ten years he has had no child. His wives do not conceive at all. That is due to the curse of men (*ikigune kya bandu*).'

A curse for 'soiling a man'.
Angombwike (young Christian man).

Angombwike cited a case of sterility attributed to *ikigune* because a woman had 'soiled' a man.

'She had run away three times with X. Finally her husband forced X to eat her filth and drink her urine. X was very ill but recovered. She bore no further children on her return to her husband. She went to Lyandeleko (the informant's mother) for medicine but the latter said she could not help as it was *ikigune*. Her neighbours were shocked because she had "soiled the child of someone". Also the neighbours of X's father were shocked. Their "breath" takes effect because she visits frequently in their village, going to see a grandparent. They say: "This is the woman who soiled our child." '

N.B.—It is the woman who is held to have suffered, not her husband or X.

A curse due to incest.
Grant (young Christian man).

'A, son of B (a chief), made love to his father's sister X. X's husband, C, had married (*ukusakula*) a full sister, Y, of A. A lay with X. A had syphilis and X and her husband C both fell sick of it. C asked X where the disease came from. She accused A. C complained to B. B was very angry and all men were astonished at it. It is forbidden. How could he have intercourse with his mother, the sister of his father! B took four of A's cows and gave them to C. People cursed (*ukuguna*) A, who was very ill for two years. His eye came out of its socket. He went to a mission hospital.

'The villagers (*amafumu*) gathered at B's and said: "This sickness of A is because of that case of his when he lay with X. It is because of that he is sick." So B sent to A and told him to bring four cows, which he did. B called his people and brothers and sisters and said: "Bless your child." They swore and swore at him, and they caught hold of the woman and swore, saying: "How did you agree to sleep with your

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child? You have both sinned greatly." Then they killed the cows and ate them. I was there. Very quickly A recovered and his eye is all right now.'

A curse on a senior village headman due to the anger of a junior village headman.
Mwandeba (*Pagan man*).

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'A young chief, Mwaidemale, called his men to hoe a road at the order of the Government. The third village headman of the country and his men refused to come, saying: "Not we, we have been once already", and they beat Mwaidemale's messenger. So Mwaidemale was very angry, and reported the village headman to his father, who was also very angry and told the headman and all his men (a very big age-village) to move to another chief. And the senior headman agreed, saying: "Indeed, my junior is a proud fellow. Let them go." So they all went to the country of Mwansasu.

'Now the senior headman has fallen ill with the "breath of men". He is unable to walk. The diviner said his illness was due to "the breath" of his junior colleague—he had been cursed because he is reputed to be the favourite of the chief. He was very ill and moved to Korosso's country where he has begun to recover.

'After being away for a year the third headman brought a cow to pay to the chief (Mwakabolofu). The chief refused it, saying: "No, indeed, my country is quarrelsome. Perhaps you think it was you who built it? I do not wish that you should return. Go with your cow." Some of the third village headman's men came back and then Mwakabolofu allowed to build, but he said that he would never let the banished headman back. Many men stayed with their headman and refused to return until he did. Only two years ago (1937) the headman brought two cows to Mwakabolofu who forgave him on the condition that he found something to take to the senior headman, who was ill, to fetch him back from Korosso's country. So the third headman fetched his senior with a huge bull. They came back with it and killed it and drank much beer and made friends. Most of the beer was provided by the third headman, who had spent two years in exile, but some by the senior.

'The mystical power (*amanga*) of the third headman and his men was able to reach the senior headman because a whole village had moved, but had a single man moved he would not have been able to send "breath" to another country, because when "the defenders" come at night in the power of *amanga* (*mmanga gabo*) the owners of the country who remain in it ask them: "Where are you going?" and

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they reply: "We are just walking about in our country, to our homes", and the owners of the country do not drive them away; but of a single man they ask: "Why are you walking about here?" and they drive him off.'

'The breath of men' and witchcraft.
Mwambuputa (Senior village headman).

' "The breath of men' (*embepo sya bandu*) and witchcraft (*ubuloti*) go together. If all the members of a village murmur that a certain man is evil then the words of the innocent (*abelu*) have no weight, no strength at all, but those of the heavy ones (*abasito*) have. It is the heavy ones who carry that breath into his body in dreams, they chastise him, but the innocent just talk and murmur against him, that is all.'

Question: 'Then that breath comes from the pythons inside them?'

Mwambuputa: 'Yes, that is where it comes from, it is one with witchcraft, identical. Sometimes they just chastised him a little, he did not die, but just fell sick; and in such a case there was never any drinking of *umwafi*; if he killed a beast for them they would pray (*ukwiputa*) and pray, they would let out all their anger, saying: "Certainly we were angry, it was us, but now it is all over." Then life came back to him and he recovered. That is the curse (*ikigune*).

'But sometimes they would kill him—and then they had to drink *umwafi* . . . if a man died and they found spear-marks, wounds, in his entrails the chief would get angry and say: "You have killed your fellow, drink the *umwafi*." So then the *umwafi* would convict one of witchcraft and he would be expelled from the country. For we said: "It is forbidden to kill a man." We others were afraid, although we had disliked the victim ourselves, we feared that at some later time the witch would kill us.'

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23. RITUAL OF RECONCILIATION

Mwakionde (*doctor, brother of a chief*).

789 'If my son has sworn at me, my friends in the village are angry and say: "Why has our child sworn at his father?" Then the youth falls ill, and people say: "It is the curse (*ikigune*). It was we who were angry, because he swore at our fellow." Then he seeks something with which to pay—perhaps a bull or cow. If I, the father, am a rich man I brew beer for the people coming to instruct my child and to say: "It was we who were angry, young man, because you swore at your father. Now may you recover!" While they are drinking the beer they kill the bull, which he found, and eat it.'

Mwambelike (*pagan man*).

'A junior relative who has wronged a senior and later wishes to make friends has to satisfy not only him but his neighbours. For example: A man X seduced a widow of his father who was regarded as the property of his senior half-brother, Y, the heir. (She was not Y's wife, because she was a sister of his mother, but given to deceased's younger half-brother.) Later X paid Y one cow as a fine "for seducing his mother". Then X brought him a bull to re-enter the family and ma e friends, saying: "Indeed, I wronged you, my father." Y said: "If you wish to make friends again you must also bring a cow for the village to eat, so that all shall know that I am satisfied." X brought a heifer calf which was eaten by the village.'

There was no mention of sickness in this case.

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764 556 wealth of the family in cattle and the number of its affines. There is a direct relationship between the number of cattle killed and the number of people who come to a burial. On one occasion we were told: 'There are not many people here because there is little meat; they only killed one bull!' And this connection can be observed at any burial; hundreds of people come to mourn the rich, only a few to mourn the poor. And if no meat is killed there is usually no dancing at all. But once a crowd has gathered it is in itself an inducement to others to come. When men were dancing the funeral dance in the rain a neighbour commented: 'They will say there is no rain for many women are present.' We have seen a crowd of 2,000 or more at a funeral, with 100 men dancing at once.

The meat is divided among the chief, the relatives, the neighbours, and the non-relatives from a distance. To the chief of the country is given the breast and ribs of one beast: 'This is to honour him.' To each affine who brings a beast a whole leg is returned to be eaten. To the various groups of non-relatives from other chiefdoms is given sometimes a side, sometimes a leg, and the rest of the meat is divided between the relatives and neighbours who have come from the same or adjoining villages. At large funerals, where many cows are killed and where people gather from all the villages of the chiefdom, a portion of the meat is presented to each of the various village headmen to eat with his men; at smaller funerals the division is made less formally.

'A man's very own cow, that of his lineage, is eaten by the people of the country, not the relatives, because the people [non-relatives] always looked at it thinking: "It's ours." ' A picture of ghoulish expectation? That indeed is an element of Nyakyusa thought. While we were in the country a number of chiefs forbade the [754] offering of funeral meat to non-relatives, for, it was believed, gluttonous neighbours sometimes killed a man by witchcraft[1] in order to feast at his funeral.

The kinsmen of the dead man gain prestige from a lavish funeral. They are compelled to sacrifice by fear lest the anger of the shades, or the 'breath' of their neighbours, should bring misfortune upon them, and they are rewarded by the admiration of men when they do so.

764 ● 626 Social pressure is not always exerted upon the members of the dead man's family to provide cattle themselves. If he left sufficient cattle to sustain the family dignity they only kill from his own

[1] cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 93.

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herd. But if he has not left sufficient, then they are ashamed not to make good the deficiency. 'If no cows are killed at a burial we others [non-relatives] say that it was a mean burial, that the dead man was a pauper without kin, for if he had had kinsmen they would have killed cows for him. So then the relatives grieve their poor griefs alone, we others don't go to that burial.' To a poor burial the members of the same village do in fact come, as they are obliged to do; but few other people come, and there is seldom any dancing.

There is one other situation in which a member of the family is under obligation to kill. If the dead man is buried by his 'father' at his 'father's' place, then one of his 'father's' cows must be killed. But if his 'father' does not choose to exercise his privilege of carrying the body to his place for burial (and he need not do so unless he wishes), then there is no such obligation.

Upon affines, however, the obligation is absolute, unless they actually have not got a cow or bull available. 'If a father-in-law brings no beast to his son-in-law's burial, then his daughter is estranged from him, she asks angrily why he does not bring one, seeing that her husband has died.' 'If a son-in-law does not bring a cow to his father-in-law's burial, though he has one that he might have brought, he is ashamed before men. They say to him: "Your wife's father has died, why did you not bring a cow? Perhaps you think you have a father-in-law still alive (i.e. the dead man's heir, to whom all previous obligations are due, and with whom the relationship of affinity continues very much as before), but he himself, your own father-in-law, has died."' And thus, if insufficient cows are killed to maintain the family dignity, both the family and the affines are made to feel ashamed.

Occasionally a friend of the dead man, who is no relative, brings a bull to kill, as a sign of friendship and affection, but he has no obligation to do so.

Social position, both in its practical aspect of authority and in its emotion aspect of prestige, depends primarily, among the Nyakyusa, on the generous use of wealth, or, to put it more simply, on feeding people. The Nyakyusa insisted on this again and again in explaining the relative status of different people: one man is great and distinguished (*nsiya*) because he feeds people, another who feeds people less is less distinguished. At a lavish funeral, where many people gather and eat meat, they go home in

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ritual they distinguish *abakamu* (kinsmen) from *abandu itolo* (non-relatives) or *abapakipanga* (villagers), and *abakikolo* (those of the lineage of a dead man) from *abako* (affines) and mother's relatives (*abipwa*). These categories have different functions.

(*b*) *Christians*

The performance of family rituals is complicated by the fact that 16 per cent of the Nyakyusa are professing Christians, and in almost every lineage there are individuals who withdraw from the full performance of traditional rituals at death, puberty, and marriage, birth, and misfortune. In most cases such a withdrawal is treated tolerantly by the pagan kinsmen: the Christian kinsmen come to mourn, to congratulate the bride, to express sympathy with the parents of twins; and their non-participation in the washing and shaving and avoidance of ritual meat and beer is accepted. At the funeral of Mwamulenga his preceding full brother, who should have been a principal in the death ritual, was a Christian, and he took no part, though his children went through it. At the funeral of Mwampiki (p. 248) one boy was left untreated on the ground that he was a Christian and a Christian 'should not have two gods'. At the puberty ritual of Mwaihojo's daughter (p. 91) the brother called to wash with her was influenced by Christians and was reluctant to take part, though he finally did so.

Only when a son who is heir to family wealth, or to the office of chieftainship or priesthood refuses the inheritance of widows (as a Christian must do) is there very strong pressure on him to conform to traditional custom: the union of the heir with the widows is held essential to their health. Sometimes also there is acute conflict between different members of the family over the performance of an autopsy, the pagans pressing for it and the Christians opposing it. This we saw in the death of E. when her pagan senior brother wished to examine her, and her Christian junior brother opposed him vehemently.

That Christians cannot take part in certain of the rituals[1] and do not suffer if they omit them is generally accepted. The farewell to the dead at the homestead of the deceased, and the treatment of kinsmen of twins, fall into this category. About certain other rituals, such as the ritual of the gasping cough and the protection against sorcery, opinions are divided. Some of our Christian friends insisted that 'the gasping cough is a real illness' and cited

[1] There are minor differences in the rules of the different missions.

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121 554 linked to the physiological cycle of individuals and their close kin, and cannot be detached from it as in Christianity.

121 626 Law is a condition of social survival; no society can exist without it; and in so far as religion helps to maintain law and order it fulfills a necessary social function. Among the Nyakyusa (and perhaps in all societies) order is maintained partly by fear of supernatural sanctions. The rituals we have described both enhance fear and relieve it. They harness fear to social ends.

121 771 The preceding chapters are full of the pagan fear of death, menstruation, childbirth, and shedding blood. The rituals express the fear and teach men what they must do to be saved. They teach them to co-operate with their kinsmen and to follow traditional custom, for in that alone does salvation lie. The fear of madness or sterility compels each generation to follow traditional custom as ordained for them by the heroes: thus is the dependence of man upon his society instilled. The death ritual illustrates this most dramatically. In every society men must overcome death emotionally, they must turn to life. In the death ritual the mourners are distraught, terrified; they express their grief and put it behind them; their relatives and neighbours gather round them, share their sorrow, and help them to overcome it. The dead is replaced. Death is associated with fecundity and so made tolerable. It is no accident that the Nyakyusa interpret all the rituals, and especially the death ritual, as a protection against going mad, against the disintegration of the personality. And safety is assured to the living by following minutely the traditions of their lineage.

[184] That the nature of men's fears is culturally determined is clear from the Nyakyusa evidence, for Christians and pagans alike are agreed that 'the Christians fear much less' than do pagans, and the Christians do in fact ignore taboos which the pagans feel to be binding. But the rituals do not create fear out of nothing. All the situations in which they are performed—birth and death, marriage, and misfortune—are situations of emotional tension in all societies. The rituals heighten the emotions and canalize them. They both teach men to feel, and teach them what it is proper to feel.

771 783 Many writers have shown us that the conception of sacred includes both the idea of holiness and of pollution;[1] that the awful, the fearful, may be conceived both as pure and as filthy. In

[1] See particularly W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889), pp. 153, 446–54 (1914 ed.); R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (1923).

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

Religion

The ancestor cult was the main feature of Ngonde religion. As long as a man had alive a father, father's full brother, or a senior brother, this senior kinsman dealt with the ancestral spirits, not only on his behalf, but also on behalf of his wives and children. In the absence of sickness or misfortune no appeal was made to the spirits. If the diviner diagnosed anger of the ancestors as cause, the senior kinsman had to pray for the sick one. If the half-brothers lived at a distance from each other after the death of their father and uncles, each might pray to the spirits to cure a little sickness, but if it persisted a message had to be sent to the senior kinsman. Wrongs which aroused the anger of the spirits were usually breaches of family morality, insult to a father, neglect of responsibilities by an heir. Offerings consisted of a bull, hen, or beer in the case of commoners, a cow in the case of a chief. The worship of dead chiefs as such was not connected with everyday morality. On the offering of cows by chiefs to their immediate ancestors depended the food and health of the chiefdom and the fertility of women and cows.[1]

Each Kyungu was buried in the valley around Mbande, and the grave was planted with trees, making a sacred grove. In times of drought and widespread sickness, sacrifices were made at the groves under the guidance of a diviner.[2] An insult to the living Kyungu was believed to cause a drought. Each chief or noble was believed to be able to avert local misfortunes for his own people, and the head of every family participated in the divinity of his own ancestors. The great commoners of each chief were believed to have independent access to his ancestral spirits, and so to have a hold upon him. The nobles of Ngonde had a similar power over the Kyungu.

As the Kyungu's health was bound up with the welfare of the community, elaborate precautions to maintain his health and to protect him from the danger of sexual impurity were taken, and when he ailed he was killed by suffocation.[3]

Sacred lagoons by the lake were associated not with the ancestors, but with a vague supreme deity, *Mbumba*.[4]

There were two important annual rituals for the whole tribe in addition to the special sacrifices to avert misfortune. One was the clearing out of the ashes each year after the break of the rains, which was performed on the order of the Kyungu, given through the nobles of Ngonde. The second was the elaborate first-fruits ceremony: fruits were offered by the nobles of Ngonde, in the grove of the last dead Kyungu, and then by the great chiefs, each in the grove of his own predecessor. The nobles and the chiefs of the hills had similar rituals, but they were not synchronized with those of the plain.[5]

Witchcraft

The Ngonde believe that certain men and women have the power of harming their neighbours and neighbours' cattle without taking any overt action. The witchcraft is hereditary, and of particular virulence if inherited through the mother.[6] Witches exert their influence at night in dreams. There are two kinds of witches, *anamanga*, defender

[1] Wilson, 1, 1938, pp. 136–7; 1, 1938, p. 84; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 191 and 198, also Ch. VII.
[2] Wilson, 3, 1939, pp. 29–30.
[3] Ibid., p. 34; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 178–95.
[4] Ibid., pp. 34–6.
[5] Wilson, 3, 1939, pp. 29–34.
[6] Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 230–69.

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witches, who use their power beneficently and spend their dreams in efforts to counteract the aggressor witches, *avaloi*, who use their power maliciously. The great commoner is the strongest of the former type, and the 'defender of the village'. A man who earns universal unpopularity is subject to a spiritual attack from the 'defenders', and is liable to fall sick from the blast of unpopularity. Belief in this efficacy of the 'breath of men' is one of the sanctions of the accepted social order.[1]

Only magic is believed to have power to punish wrongdoers who are neither kinsmen nor members of the same chiefdom. Magic exerts an influence on the behaviour of kinsmen and affines. The witchcraft of a neglected wife may cause a man to fall sick, or that of his father-in-law may harm his children.[2] The power of witchcraft never acts between relatives, though it might between husband and wife.[3]

An aggressor witch was reported in the old days by the great commoner to the chief, who ordered the poison ordeal. If the accused failed to vomit (the dose was seldom fatal), he was proved guilty and killed or exiled, all his cows and property being taken by the chief and the victims of his aggressive witchcraft. If a private individual accused another, both were put to the ordeal; if both vomited, the accuser had to pay two cows to the other for slander; if either failed to vomit he was punished as guilty. The ordeal is now illegal, but men accused of aggressive witchcraft still find it best to fly the chiefdom. Great commoners normally used their witchcraft powers to protect their chief from attack, but if he erred they would join in the attack on him; the nobles of Ngonde had power to exert a similar constitutional check on the Kyungu.[4]

If death by aggressive witchcraft was suspected, it was proved or disproved by a routine post-mortem examination and by subsequent consultation with the diviner.[5]

Birth

A child should be born in its own father's house. A difficult birth is a sign of the guilt of adultery, and is eased by confession.[6] A few days after the birth the mother is anointed, shaved, and resumes her household duties. She later goes on a visit of some weeks to show the child to her own parents, returning to her husband after celebration by both sets of grandparents, and exchanges of food and hoes. The birth of twins was a great misfortune, requiring the segregation and ritual purification of both parents.[7]

Initiation

There was no puberty or initiation rite for boys. The initiation of a girl was really a pre-marriage rite. She went through a complicated rite to ensure fertility, in which the husband took part. The initiation lasts some months, and includes several exchanges of food between the families of the girl and her betrothed husband, and ceremonies in which her girl friends of the same village and his friends of his village take part. The girl is tested for virginity during the ceremonies. If she is not betrothed before puberty the initiation is carried out in a modified form, but the full significance is lost.[8]

[1] Wilson, 2, 1936, p. 277.
[2] Ibid., 5, 1939, p. 58.
[3] Ibid., p. 256.
[4] Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 19; Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 42–3.
[5] Ibid., 1, 1936, p. 91.
[6] Johnston, 1897, p. 443.
[7] Ibid., pp. 44–6. According to H. H. Johnston, if the children died in succession the father was expected to kill himself, but it is possible that he is recounting a custom of the Southern Tumbuka (1897, p. 427).
[8] Ibid., 1925, p. 51; Wilson and Hunter, 1939, p. 11; Wilson, 2, 1936, p. 258.

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vary in different circumstances. Millet and rice, the two most valuable crops, belong to the man and are stored by him ; so that the division of a millet or rice garden into plots and their assignment to different wives is rather a division of labour than of property. But of all other crops the woman on whose plots they have grown is an effective owner. She stores them herself in her own house and no other wife of her husband can touch them ; it is only with him that her rights are in any way shared. 241 592 421

The main use of the crops which the Nyakyusa grow is to provide food for each separate household group. Next in importance is the provision of food and beer for hospitality, and for the making of gifts both in everyday life and on special ceremonial occasions. And, finally, there is the barter or sale of surplus crops to obtain salt, pots, clothes, cattle and to pay tax. Each married woman, therefore, first uses her own crops to feed her husband, her own children and herself. If she is the only wife then she cooks for her husband every day, but, even if she is one of many, she is yet careful to cook for him frequently, in order to keep his affection and the various advantages which go with it. 592 593 574 [437]

When cooking for her husband she must, when necessary, prepare sufficient for guests, for a man very often has friends and neighbours eating with him ; and if he wishes to make a gift of cooked food, she cooks it for him from her own store. To provide meals for him and his guests and cooked food for gifts is an obligation which she normally fulfils quite willingly, as we have hinted above ; she may be fond of him ; it is in any case to her interest to play her part in the co-operative relationship which binds them together and from which both alike benefit. He hoes for her and builds her house, he gives her a share of the household milk, which he himself controls, he sleeps with and is gentle to her ; he has, without the aid of any legal, moral or conventional sanctions, a great hold over her, as she, on her side, has over him. But, if either fails to play their part in willing co-operation, then there are, for both alike, these other sanctions to fall back upon. A quarrel develops between them and leads to violence, perhaps he strikes her, perhaps she viciously repels him, one night, from her bed ; and then the immediately injured party appeals to the neighbours for support. They discuss the matter, censure one or the other, and try to make it up between them ; if they fail to do so the case may go to Court and one will then have to pay compensation to the other. Or it may happen, without any violent quarrel, without any formal appeal to the neighbours, that one of them becomes aware that his conduct is provoking their mockery and criticism ; and then in shame he mends his ways. Or, finally, one of them may fall sick and suspect that wrong-doing on his part has been followed by spiritual retribution in the form of witchcraft. 593 [574] [627] [626] [754]

A woman, then, uses her stores of food to cook not only for herself

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586 mothers[1] in secret that she is in trouble and that her husband has no regard for her, that he grudges her garden plots and gives her only small ones. Then maybe her mothers will take the initiative in suggesting that she should leave this man who is no husband and who loves her not. And they will tell their husband, her father, that his child is in trouble and—only think of it!—has scarcely a ridge[2] to call her own. So that if the girl does then find life with her husband intolerable and leaves him, her father will not be too hard on his daughter, he will not compel her to go back to him; for he knows that she was in trouble."

421 626 754] This statement, written by an educated Nyakyusa, brings out very clearly both the fact that men do at times divide their land unfairly and the nature of some of the sanctions which operate against such injustice. The faith in witchcraft provides a moral sanction of which, if the man is fool enough to disregard it, he is very likely explicitly reminded in the course of the subsequent legal proceedings; the injured wife has an immediate hold over him in virtue of the relationship of practical co-operation and emotional intimacy in which they stand to each other, a hold which, if he attempts to break it by recourse to violence, is strengthened and given a legal form by the support of their neighbours. The support of her kin is an alternative legal force[3] which an injured wife

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[1] i.e. her father's wives.

[241] [2] For many crops the ground is hoed into ridges.

[3] Some readers may be puzzled by and somewhat critical of the meaning with which the concept of law is employed in this paper. This is not the place to meet their criticisms, but, in order to avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary to define that meaning precisely. Law, then, is here distinguished alike from morality with its religious sanctions, from convention with its constraining sense of shame and from the reciprocity dictated by self-interest—with all of which it is in fact inextricably intertwined. Law is here taken to be that normal or customary form of action in society which is kept in being by the inherent necessities of systematic cooperation among its members. The particular form of law varies in different areas of society in accordance with the particular conditions of each area; but some normal form of action there must be everywhere if social life is to continue; anarchy is, in the strictest sense of the word, impracticable. A breach of law is a course of action, on the part of some individual or minority group, which is inconsistent with the normal and accepted form of cooperative action, and which would therefore, if unchecked, make continued relationship between the lawbreakers and the other members of their society wholly impossible; it threatens to dissolve society into anarchy. But breaches of law are always in fact checked, as they must be, by the actions of those with whom the lawbreakers are in practice related; and it is these actions which are the sanctions of law.

If law is to be preserved it is necessary that the actions which sanction it should have an irresistible force, the lawbreaker must normally be helpless before them; and they are only thus irresistible if the great majority of those people with whom the lawbreaker is effectively related do in fact either participate in or at least approve of them. Now in civilized areas of society, in which vast numbers of people are related, legal sanctions must be applied by a central authority if they are to be effective, for only such a central

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may call in against her husband, if she desires divorce. And, it is hinted, this particular force may sometimes be successfully invoked by a plausible woman even without good cause.

In disposing of the surplus of their crops and bananas the respective rights of a married woman and her husband vary in detail, though little in substance, according as he has or has not made a formal division between them. It is not infrequent for a man to reserve for his own use one or two plots and some banana stems, which are then called *busongo* plots or bananas (*imbaka* or *ifijinja fya busongo*). In the planting, weeding and reaping of the *busongo* plots all the man's wives co-operate if he has several, but the final product is absolutely his own, it is stored by him and they have no part in it. Conversely, however, the rights of each woman to dispose of the surplus crop of the plots allotted to her are thereby greatly increased, for her husband cannot then touch it at all.

In any case, whether or not *busongo* plots and bananas have been set aside, a woman's obligations to provide food for her husband's con-

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authority can possibly either act over the whole area or command general approval and support for its actions.

But in primitive society it is otherwise. In a small and isolated group largely composed of personal acquaintances it is difficult to escape from one's friends; while the facts of every dispute, of every breach of law, are soon widely known; and in consequence, it is there perfectly possible at times for legal sanctions to be effective without the intervention of any central authority at all. The neighbours, or the kinsmen, or the affines of a lawbreaker are in themselves a large and important section of his society, and he can only with difficulty escape their authority; he can not lose himself in a great city as can his civilised counterpart. And so the typical method of legal procedure in a primitive society is for action to be taken against a lawbreaker by those more nearly concerned, supported by general public approval. And it frequently happens that the only effective action is taken singlehanded by the injured party; nevertheless if that action is supported and strengthened by any generally expressed approval we can not deny that it possesses a legal form.

In a primitive group any request which an individual may make to his kinsmen or neighbours for practical assistance against a lawbreaker, any appeal to their opinion in a dispute is a legal procedure, for it is an appeal to authority. It is they upon whom he is in practice most dependent. Nor is it only in "private life" that he depends upon them, for, owing to the smallness of the group, the distinction between "public" and "private life" hardly exists. In many situations they hold in their hands the whole force of his society; their actions and opinions are checked or supported by the informal but nonetheless effective jury of widespread public discussion; and if they are against him he has nowhere else to turn.

Now Nyakyusa society to-day is no longer isolated and primitive, neither has it yet fully taken its place in the social system of the world; it is in process of transition. Legal procedure is, quite inevitably, becoming everyday more and more an affair of the central territorial authorities, of the Governor in Council and the High Court of Tanganyika and of their appointed deputies: the local Magistrates, the District Officers and the Native Courts. But the process is not complete. In many situations of social life the new impersonal relationships with the great world are still, for the moment, more or less irrelevant and in them the old primitive sanctions retain their power.

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166 out boundaries, drawing lines on the ground; he divided the land into
423 three portions, one for each. The others were strangers to the chiefdom
425 but had taken a fancy to that piece of land."

622 The sentence in this story "The chief gave the garden land of
624 Mwakajileke to other people" deserves remark for it in no way implies any other custom than the one we have previously described. And it illustrates the dangers of relying too much on verbal statements of custom. When a stranger is given land by a great-commoner after reference to the chief he is commonly said to have been given it by the chief. The chief, from one point of view, is the overlord and the great-commoner acts for him. But, and this is an essential qualification, the great-commoner nearly always so acts for the chief and, save exceptionally, it is wholly incorrect for the chief to grant land directly. The great-commoner acts not only for the chief but also as the representative and leader of the villagers; and in relation to them the chief cannot exercise his rights of overlordship save occasionally and in particular circumstances.

166 The old Kukwe great-commoner whom we have already quoted
423 explained this to me very clearly: "Occasionally one of his own men will
425 ask a chief to give him ground to hoe in another village, 'If indeed you
621 say that the land is yours!' (challenging the chief to assert his right of
622 overlordship). Then the chief agrees that all the land is most certainly his; but still, if it is possible, he tells the man to go to the commoners of that village and ask them for land. If the chief does not do this (but makes a direct grant of land) we blame him for not being a true chief: 'Who is it,' we ask him, 'that has built up this country? Did you do it all by yourself? It is we the commoners who have built it up! And how is it, then, that you give this man land without consulting us?'" Nor is the censure of his people mere idle talk for a Nyakyusa chief, he
[754 626] fears that they may bewitch him, that the witches among them, led by the great-commoners of the several villages, may come in dreams at night and cause him to sicken or to die.

166 So much for the initial grants of land to newcomers and the rights of
423 men returning to their home chiefdoms. If a man goes back, after moving, to a chiefdom which is in no sense his home, where, that is to say, he is not a member of an old family but in which he has himself spent some years, he is treated as a newcomer. He is welcomed but he has no rights to the ground, whether building-site or gardens, which he previously occupied.

423 Once established in a village, however, any man can hoe any unowned
425 ground within its borders and thereby make it his own. A newcomer for

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423 622 In his tenure of land every Nyakyusa man is related to some chief who is his overlord. But their relationship is not confined to the single element of land-tenure, it is just as many-sided and complex as is any other human relationship ; and even as we abstract from it the particular set of facts that immediately concerns us here we must at once refer them again to it if they are to be intelligible.

166 423 622 When a newcomer is received into a village and given land the chief, as we have seen, is normally a party to the villagers' action, and in most cases he himself ceremonially welcomes the newcomer if he comes from outside the chiefdom by sending to him a present of cooked food. He has gained a new subject and his power and prestige are thereby increased. [427] As men are quite free to move from one tiny chiefdom to another and as land is still relatively plentiful the phenomenon of rent does not exist among the pagan Nyakyusa, there is no direct charge ever specifically made in return for the right to build and cultivate. Nevertheless a chief is a chief and his subjects' land is his as well as theirs and they are under certain obligations to him.

622 554 [585] Among these obligations that of providing cooked food for the ceremonies of the chief's own immediate family is probably the most important. When a chief's daughter, for example, is getting married women from all over the chiefdom bring food to entertain the bridegroom and his friends on the day that they bring the bulk of the cattle. The obligation to bring food, though not a legal one, is both reciprocal and conventional. The chief is expected to kill one or two of the beasts to feed his people and if he is mean about this, killing one where he should have killed two, then on the next occasion his people are more reluctant to bring food. [626] But there is also the sense of shame constraining individuals. If the majority of households in a village provide food for a chief on such an occasion, and the majority I think nearly always do so, then the shameful meanness and unconventionality of defaulters is the subject of adverse comment among them.

A chief also has the traditional right, still widely admitted to-day, to send and take food, especially milk and bananas, from his subjects if he has need of it. And we have seen already that men with more than one wife are prompted to retain *busongo* bananas for themselves in order to meet his demands without upsetting the peace of their households. This [177] traditional right however is known not to be admitted by the European Administration, on the grounds that a salary has taken its place, and is therefore beginning to fall into disuse. Chiefs, I was told, often fear to exercise it lest some man refuse obedience and take a complaint to the *Boma*, nor are they willing to confine their demands to those men of whose compliance they are certain. As the salary of an ordinary chief,

Sometimes a chief who was a powerful personality rode roughshod over his headmen and achieved a measure of autocracy; but most headmen would not allow this and in their opposition they had the full support of their villagers, as well as the moral backing of public opinion. There are remembered cases in pre-European days when a chief was deposed or reduced to a non-entity by his headmen acting together in the face of what they considered to be encroachments on the inviolability of village unity and independence. In any case, however, even the strongest chiefs were little disposed to interfere in the land matters of their villages; few wished to be bothered with the details of land rights. A chief could legitimately complain if he were not kept informed by his headmen, but his approval of their actions – and most especially in land matters – was very largely a formality.

Traditional Land Tenure

As already briefly described, a village comes into formal existence at the time of the formation of a new chiefdom. At that time its building site and arable and pastoral areas were roughly demarcated by the retiring headmen of the old chiefdom. Within the village, members were allocated their house plots and each man tended to take the strip of land stretching behind his plot and make his field there. The land was shared out on a friendly, co-operative basis; the new headman smoothed out any difficulties and settled any disputes. Thus was the pattern of land-holding established. Apart from the relative value of a plot proximate to a man's house, there was little or no cause for dispute as land needs were small and the supply plentiful. An established villager could, without notification or special permission, extend his cultivation to any land which lay vacant – i.e., which was not in use or under fallow by a fellow-villager. There was therefore no need for a man to try at first to grab more land than he immediately required, nor did he need to be jealous of his neighbours' claims.

A villager's rights to the use of his land were quite secure and he had no fear of eviction or of the seizure of part of his holding. It is said that very occasionally a chief might take a man's holding but I think, at least in the Lake Plains, that this must have been most unusual. In fact, of course, so long as a man was allowed to reap his crop there was little value attached to the plot as such when nearly similar ground stood unused. Men sought security not on their plots of land, but in their membership of the village community, which assured them of their continuing rights to adequate opportunity for cultivation over the years. However, virtually every man had an excellent security of tenure on his holding during the mature life of his age-village (i.e. until at least the next "coming-out" ceremony), and if he died his heir, should he wish, could come and live in his house and cultivate his fields without hindrance. The way in which he cultivated, though of course strongly conditioned by custom and convention, was his own affair, and he sub-divided his holding amongst his own family as he thought fit. He could not, however, allocate any of his land to a man living in another village, nor could he permit it to be cultivated by such a stranger.

Through fear of witchcraft, because of persistent illness, misfortune or unfriendliness, in order to live near a relative or friend, or to inherit elsewhere, a man might leave his village and his age-mates. Then he had to give up his land-holding. When a man moved because of witchcraft or illness (much the same thing and a chief cause of movement) his land was normally left idle pending his hoped-for return, and his former neighbours would do all they could to induce him to return to his old home and fields – even to the use of force (see Wilson, G. 1938, pp. 32-3). His departure was an accusation against them, and a disturbance of co-operative unity. If the man consistently refused to return, or if it was known that he had definitely left for good, his

number of separate plots per holding was less than where land was scarcer; at the same time the average size of separate plots was smaller in those more land-hungry villages. The reader may refer to Table III (page 15) for some illustrative figures. Though differences are not yet very great, nevertheless there seems to be a fairly clear correlation between the average size of villagers' holdings on the one hand, and on the other the number and size of separate plots, and this is entirely borne out by my general information obtained in villages where actual measurements were not made. The inescapable conclusion must be that increasing scarcity of land in the Lake Plains leads to increasing fragmentation and dispersion of holdings; further, the present land situation and land tenure system can only lead to a continuation of this trend.

To emphasise the actual situation in 1955, let me reiterate the results of my own village surveys in the very high density region. In a village in Koroso's chiefdom only a quarter of the younger men had paddy land of their own, holdings averaging about three-quarters of an acre; in a village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, only 17 per cent. of the younger men had paddy land and holdings averaged about half an acre (cf. Table VII, page 37). These two examples are taken from the areas of most severe land shortage and are not therefore altogether typical of the whole Lake Plains. Nevertheless, I do not think that they are entirely atypical; more importantly, they indicate the present trend. Within another generation this fragmentation and scatter of holdings may well be the common feature everywhere in the flood plains unless the system of tenure and inheritance is modified. If the increase in population is quickened through improved medical facilities, better diet and housing, and improved conditions generally, then the position will become more acute. Such an increase is only to be expected. The Nyakyusa have decisively entered a money economy and they have learnt to seek higher standards of living. Only from their fields, by cash-cropping, can they expect to earn their livings and the demand for better living will not be curtailed – nor, of course, is it desirable that it should be.

There is another aspect of this whole matter which must be considered. It relates to the movement of individuals between villages. Such movement was, in earlier European days, a crucial factor in the age-village structure, for it was not only exceedingly frequent, but also it tended to undermine the idealised coeval basis of village life. Movement between villages is increasingly difficult now, for a newcomer naturally cannot easily obtain land, nor as much land as he would desire even at a moderate demand. Nevertheless, the reasons for movement persist, and they will do so whilst the fear of witchcraft remains and whilst illness and misfortune are attributable to the unfavourable aura of a place. There remains also the tradition of moving so that a man may escape from bad relations with kinsfolk or neighbours, or from the obloquy resulting from his own disapproved actions. Much social and psychological tension is being created now as a result of the new difficulty of movement, and so far the Nyakyusa have not evolved alternative methods.

On the other hand, so deeply engrained is the notion of the prestige and power which accrues to a village by virtue of the number of its inhabitants, that headmen and villagers alike remain most reluctant to refuse to accept newcomers, even when it inevitably means that the present inhabitants must meet a further decrease in the average amount of land available per family, for a newcomer must be allocated a holding if he is to remain. Consequently, if a holding is for any reason left vacant, a headman tends to refuse to re-allocate some or all of it amongst his villagers and thus to augment their holdings; but instead he keeps it in reserve pending the hoped-for arrival of another newcomer. Men desiring to leave their own village try to get

Security of tenure has continued into European times, and although perhaps weakened slightly in one way through the exaggerated powers which accrue to modern Government-supported chiefs, it has been strengthened by the modern peace and rule of law and the more efficient system of justice provided by the established local courts. According to G. Wilson (Wilson, G., 1938, p. 32) the increase in the movement of individuals between villages in earlier European times (i.e., up to about 1940-45) directly caused a lack of attachment to individual plots, and thus security of tenure was not considered particularly important.

The new situation of land shortage does not affect the basic position, or rather, by producing a high scarcity value on land, it has brought about an intensification of individuals' rights over their holdings. No longer dare a chief or headman attempt to commit such illegal acts as the seizure of a villager's field, so long as that villager is not afraid to publicise the affair. A man is not, and cannot afford to be, prepared to lose his field, for he cannot replace it with any certainty, either in a convenient location or elsewhere. A headman may sometimes bring strong pressure to bear on some of the men of his village to try to persuade them to give up portions of their land to assist a newcomer or a landless neighbour, but a villager can and does refuse and there is no legal authority which can override him here. As the land shortage becomes more obvious and more acute so men become less willing to allow their holdings to be touched for any reason, by anyone. The re-allocation at a "coming-out" ceremony appears to have been dropped nowadays[1] and thus a man holds his land undisturbed until his death, when it passes by inheritance to his sons. There are cases now where grandsons of the original holder occupy land through undisturbed and undisputed inheritance. A man can, as he wishes, loan a kinsman or friend a plot in his holding, or he can make an outright gift. The principal restriction which remains is that a man must continue to live in the village in order to retain these rights; he must relinquish them if he permanently goes to live elsewhere. Nevertheless, the land of a well-established villager would be kept for him pending his hoped-for return, for if he has left in umbrage and fear because of suspected witchcraft, then he may be persuaded to come back after a time. The headman and his neighbours should in fact persist in their attempts to persuade him, even to the use of force, for this is not only a moral duty of age-mates and fellow-villagers but is also an effort to remove the implications of their alleged witchcraft and anti-social conduct.

Once, therefore, a man obtains land he has absolute rights in it during his continued residence in the village. Especially today, older men seldom shift their homes and almost all land is now held on a tenure which will be passed on by inheritance.

Boundary disputes are few. Usually, and increasingly, village boundaries are well known, and field boundaries invariably are. During my field measurements in the sample villages, I never met any difficulty with my local teams in quickly establishing the ownership and exact limits of any plot. Boundaries are usually marked by small ridges of accumulated debris or by narrow paths, and these form an intricate and irregular network throughout a village's arable area. They are so well known that there is very little scope for a greedy man to attempt to encroach on a neighbour's holding at hoeing time. If minor disagreements do arise at that season they can be immediately settled – by appeal to neighbours working nearby if necessary – and the headman or his assistant may well not be called in at all.

1. This is the case in the Lake Plains. In some of the more conservative Highland chiefdoms where the cash economy is less advanced and land scarcity is not serious, there still appears to be some re-allocation in favour of the young men in the traditional way. In general, however, it is clear that the traditional age-village system of land allocation is obsolete; see pages 29ff.